

Translator's Forward:

This is one of the short stories found in the second Full Metal Panic! novel entitled "Houtte okenai ROON URUFU?" (A Lone Wolf That Can't Be Left Alone?). This novel includes other short stories such as "Koutetsu no SAMAA IRYUUJON" (A Steely Summer Illusion), which was an episode in the "Fumoffu" anime series. I was flipping through this novel the other day when I ran across one of the illustrations (which you will see), and I immediately started translating it. For those wondering, I have made no plans to completely translate this or any of the short story novels. This story is written like someone telling a fairytale in Japanese, so I wanted to try to get that across as best I could in the syntax structure. Anyway, I hope you have as much fun reading this story as I had translating it.

Full Metal Panic!
A Lone Wolf That Can't Be Left Alone?

Cinderella Panic!

(A Special Story)
May 30, 2004

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Illustrations: Douji Shiki

A long time ago, there was a beautiful girl who lived in a certain country.

This girl had somewhat of a tough countenance, beautiful, black hair that reached down to her waist, and eyes that sparkled with intelligence.

This girl, who lived in a great mansion and was raised by kind parents, lived in happiness, never wanting for anything.

However, one day her beloved mother grew ill and died. Now Kaname- or the girl's saving grace was her toughness, but she was naturally saddened by this event.

For the sake of his grief-stricken daughter, who spent her days in tears, the father found her a new mother.

"If you think about it, that was a big mistake," the girl would tell her new friends afterwards, but- her stepmother, in any case, was a wicked woman. She was vain, malicious, greedy, and had three daughters of her own, who also had bad personalities.

Most people would think, "Is it normal to marry someone like that?" but it can only be said that the father's perception had been clouded by the loneliness of being a widower.

The stepmother and three stepsisters were jealous of the girl's beauty, and harassed her terribly behind the father's back. They made a list of insults abusing the girl in the mansion bathroom, and ridiculed the watch she kept as a memento of her mother.

It's the way life goes, but it's known that in bad times, bad things tend to pile up. It wasn't long before the father unexpectedly became sick and died, as well.

This made the stepmother happy, and she confiscated all of the girl's pretty dresses and made her live in the dirty attic.

The siege was complete.

"U- uh wa ha ha ha ha..."

The girl could do nothing but laugh. She was made to work day in and day out, often without being given food to eat, and without being able to get a satisfactory education.

While working a hard job in the three kitchens **1, the girl became filthy with the ash from the ovens, and soon was called the name "Cinderella" from French. And just like it sounds, there was a destiny in the name Cinderella. You've learned about it, right?

Anyway, that destiny is that Cinderella lived in misery everyday.

"Ci~n~de~re~llaaaa~!!" her stepmother, Mizuki, screamed, and kicked Cinderella in the butt. Cinderella, who had been wiping down the corridor with a washcloth, fell over and kissed the floor. She then spit out the trash that had entered her mouth.

"Ouch... what'd you do that for!?"

"Quiet! I'm the mistress of this house, am I not!? If I see a behind in my face that I don't like, I can haul out and kick it if I want! And Cinderella- I especially don't like your behind! Kuh, kuh!"

Stepmother Mizuki let out a rain of kicks. Poor Cinderella had no choice but to curl up like a roly-poly bug **2 and "endure" it.

"Yo... you."

"Ah, this is fun. Hey, girls! Come here and torture Cinderella!"

"Ye~~s, Mother!"

Mizuki's three daughters- Manami, Madoka and Shouko- each took a harisen **3 and rushed at Cinderella.

"Ei!"

"You!"

"Yah!"

Bish! Zubish! Bash!

This was more of what you would call a "unilateral lynching" than domestic violence. This ghastly spectacle was often seen in this mansion.

"Okay, stop your swinging!" stepmother Mizuki said when she saw an opportune moment. When the soaring dust finally settled, Cinderella was groveling on the floor.

"Da... dammit..."

Mizuki stood cold-heartedly in front of the battered Cinderella.

"Hmph. You look good like that, Cinderella. If you have learned your lesson, you won't ever talk back to me again. Got it?"

"..."

To tell the truth, Cinderella's rebellious spirit was still quite healthy, but because she hated pain, she remained quiet.

"If you understand, hurry up and finish wiping down the corridor. When you're done with that, clean the bathroom. I want it so clean you can put your face on it. I'll make you lick the chamber pot afterwards!"

Even her wicked stepmother usually never went this far.

"Eww. Noo..."

"Shut up. Just be thankful you don't have to make dinner!"

"Huh... why not?" Cinderella said with a blank look. Making dinner was usually her daily chore.

"You don't know, Cinderella?" said her oldest sister, Manami.

"Tonight they are holding a great ball at the palace!" said her second sister, Madoka.

"So that the prince can choose a bride, all of the young ladies in the kingdom have been invited-" said her third sister, Shouko.

"Wh-what are..."

"That's correct. Since we are going to the ball, you can eat yesterday's leftover sardines and cold rice. But if you want me to, I'll bring you back some of the feast in a doggie bag. Oh ho ho."

"Bu, but- I want to go, too..."

"No," they all said in unison.

"Of course not..."

The four malicious women looked down on the depressed Cinderella in amusement. Even though that was their role, it was a terrible thing to do.

"Now then, it's time to get ready, girls! Try your best, dress up, and win the prince's heart. If you do, we'll have all the power over this country that we could want. Manipulating the government from the shadows and receiving plenty of favors from contractors and banks!"

"Ye~~~~s!" the three girls answered full of spirit, and taking them with her, Mizuki left the room.

"Now, take care of the house," stepmother Mizuki said to Cinderella from a magnificent carriage. She and her three daughters were dressed up in gorgeous dresses.

"When you're finished wiping the windows and cleaning the entrance way, hurry up and go to bed. Got it?"

"Yes..." Cinderella replied in a dispirited voice.

"I'll go ahead and say it, but trying to sneak out to come to the ball afterwards is pointless, Cinderella, since you have neither an invitation nor a dress. Fu fu fu fu," Mizuki laughed in sinister fashion. "It would be impossible for a filthy girl to get in, first of all. The palace's guard is strong, and is secured by a super elite anti-terror special force."

"What in the world kind of palace is it...?"

"Quiet... well, then, we're off!" Mizuki ordered, and the coachmen cracked his whip. The coach kicked up the dust, and was soon far away from the mansion.

"...they're gone," Cinderella said in a relieved voice. With the four witches gone, she could finally get a moment's rest.

She quickly finished her work, and returned to her gloomy attic. Cinderella sat down on her ragged bed, and gazed dreamily at the palace from her window.

"Haaa..."

The palace was lit up beautifully against the twilight, somewhat like the Disneyland in Tokyo. Tonight, inside that palace, the splendid prince would choose his bride. Luxurious cuisine and groovy music... that's what would be at that fun ball.

"Hmph... I'm not the least bit jealous," Cinderella said resentfully, "Those kinds of playboys can just gather there if they want to... it makes me sick."

Now she was in her insecurity complex mode.

"I couldn't... it wouldn't work out for me, anyway. This attic is my world. That's my lot in life. That's right, it's a road stained with blood. Just like a violent wind blowing..." she said, and continued muttering strange

things. Her mood quickly became more miserable, and soon the tears were spilling over.

"Oh... Mother and Father in Heaven. Why did you die? I'm left alone with only fate. Uhu."

And in that state, Cinderella was sinking quickly into sadness, when-

"I'll have you stop crying now," said the voice of a blunt man suddenly.

When Cinderella turned around, there stood a magical young man.

He had a taciturn face, and his mouth was turned down in a frown. He was wearing a pointed hat with city-camouflaged robes, and instead of a wand, he was holding a Panzer Faust-disposable anti-tank rocket launcher. It looked like his own idea of fantasy.

"Who are you...?" Cinderella asked.

"I am the wizard Sergeant Sousuke Sagara. I have been dispatched by Mithril, a top-secret magical society that is not affiliated with any country. My identification number is B-3128, and my call sign is Urzu 7."

"Oh."

After the wizard Sergeant Sagara had carefully looked around the room with a critical eye, he said:

"My mission is to provide multilateral support to unfortunate humans. If you want to go to the ball, it is in my power to make it possible, Chidori."

"But I'm Cinderella..."

"It seems you're called that, too," the wizard shrugged off impudently.

"...a-anyway, I don't believe this. That a wizard would suddenly come here."

"Is that so?"

"Of course. And you especially don't have the dignity of a wizard at all. Why am I getting more of the feeling of rejected goods?"

It was exactly as Cinderella said. There wasn't an ounce of the aesthetic ambiance that these people normally have coming from this wizard- only the smell of gunpowder and smoke drifting in the air.

"But I am the real thing."

"You're not going to convince me by just saying you are. Show me proof- got it? Proof. Okay, then... show me some magic or something."

"Magic, then... fine, I will show you," he said boldly, and then slowly took a small spoon from underneath his robes.

"Bippity boppity boo."

When he recited the spell, the spoon turned around.

That was all.

"...is it over?"

"I still have more."

When she saw the wizard take a small fork from his robes, Cinderella waved her hand with a weary expression on her face.

"That's enough..."

"I also have a technique where I can go from a cross-legged sitting position to floating in mid-air in only one second."

"What's the point in that? At a bad time, it would be better to shoot a fireball from your hand or something..."

"? What are you talking about?"

"Nevermind, don't worry about it."

Since it seemed like she would displease him by going on about the problem, Cinderella changed the subject.

She sighed and sat slovenly in a cross-legged position on top of her bed.

"...so? You said that would take me to the ball, didn't you?"

"Affirmative."



"Well, I'm happy, but how? You don't happen to have a dress, invitation or a coach, do you?" Cinderella said sarcastically, looking down at her filthy clothes.

"It's not a problem. First off, prepare the following."

The wizard took out a scrap piece of paper from his robes, and disinterestedly read it out loud.

"First you'll need one pumpkin, four house mice, one lizard..."

"Uh huh..."

"Also one assault rifle, one shotgun..."

"Huh?"

"Two dozen anti-personal hand grenades, 160 5.56mm bullets, three cases of C4 explosives, six Claymore land mines..."

"What's all that?"

The wizard reread the list with a look of confusion; then, looking sort of embarrassed, he said, "That was a mistake. Those last items are my shopping list. The only things you need are the pumpkin, mice and lizard."

"Ah, I see..."

Is it okay to trust this kind of guy? Cinderella worried.

Cinderella looked around the mansion and prepared the needed items. She shut the mice and lizard in a basket at the front of the entranceway, set the pumpkin on the ground, and then said to the wizard, "That's everything. Now what?"

"Okay. Now stand over there. Don't move away from the pumpkin and the mice," he said, and then briskly walked away from Cinderella. He meddled with the anti-tank rocket launcher that he had in place of a wand, and raised up the firing lever and sight.

"What are you going to do?"

"Use magic. This wand may look simply like a Panzer Faust, but it's really a magical rocket launcher. Instead of common explosives, I've loaded it with the magical explosives that freely use the latest in magic technology. Its operation is simple. You look into the magic sight, and simply press the magic button."

It seemed that as long as you attached "magic" to it, anything was permissible.

When the wizard Sergeant Sagara had plenty of distance, he slowly got down on one knee and aimed the anti-tank rocket. As he aimed the dangerous weapon at her, Cinderella turned pale.

"Wa...! What are you doing!?"

"Don't run! It's a disposable, so I only have one shot."

Namely, failure was not an option. The wizard was very serious.

He looked through the sight at Cinderella- as well as the pumpkin and mice next to her- and determined his aim closely.

"A-are you trying to kill me!? If you shoot such a thing at me-"

"It's too late to argue, Fire!"

And the wizard shot.

The warhead rushed savagely towards Cinderella. Poor Cinderella could only scream out in alarm, and in the next instant, she, the pumpkin, mice and lizard, were engulfed in a blaze of crimson.

"Direct hit...!"

His robes flapping from the blast, the wizard discarded the empty rocket tube. There was a strange dignity in that action.

Now then, did our Cinderella die gloriously in the bomb's blast?

No, she did not.

Because when the flames and smoke cleared, there stood a beautiful girl dressed in a fabulous gown. It was the form of Cinderella, magnificently and quickly changed by the rocket's magic.

"Cough, cough-"

At the same time the pumpkin had been changed into a carriage, the mice into horses, and the lizard into a coachman.

Cinderella was shocked when she looked down at herself.

"This... is me?"

She was wearing a pure white gown and glass slippers, as well as a flashy necklace and diamond tiara. Her shiny black hair matched well with her lovely clothing. Because she was a beautiful girl to start out with, being dressed up like this made her look absolutely ravishing.

The wizard came up to the young lady and said in a cocky manner, "You saw it. This is the power of the latest magic technology."

Cinderella's shoulders drooped a little bit.

"You can't say something like 'You're pretty' or 'That suits you', you war-minded idiot..."

"? What are you talking about?"

"Nothing... anyway, I'm extremely satisfied. With this I can go to the ball. Thank you!"

"Don't thank me yet. This is a mission. Now... take this."

The wizard handed her a piece of parchment.

"What's this?"

"It's an invitation to the ball. I forged it."

"Ah."

"Now go, Cinderella. I don't know what's enjoyable at a ball, but you can dance until you are satisfied."

"Everything you say has a way of provoking me..." Cinderella grumbled as she got into the carriage. The wizard then stopped her.

"Now, this magic will automatically end at 0000 Hours. Achieve your objective by then, and quickly withdraw. Otherwise your true form will be exposed, and you will be imprisoned by the palace's GIGN."

"I understand, but... what's the GIGN?"

"France's Special Forces. They are excellent."

"Are we in France...?"

"Don't think about it too deeply."

"..."

And with that, the pumpkin carriage in which Cinderella was riding started off for the palace.

The young ladies, dressed as they pleased, were gathered in the banquet hall of the palace.

There were those who were seriously set on winning the prince's heart, those who came simply to ridicule, those who sold food and drink, and those who were starting soccer betting pools- everyone had their own agendas.

Cheerful music played by a symphony orchestra filled the room. It was a ball for girls to assemble, but for some reason the musical program was Beethoven's "Fate". Because it was a rather dark piece, it made it difficult for everyone to dance.

"Umm, Father. Is it possible to play some other music...?" said Prince Kyouko, the lead role in this ball. Somehow he's the prince, but he's a cute girl with dragonfly glasses and pigtails (it's an illogical sentence, but you shouldn't worry about it too much).

"Hmph. It's just my personal preference... what's wrong with it?" asked King Hayashimizu, the ruler of this country.

He was an intelligent-looking man who had his hair styled back and brass-rimmed glasses that suited him nicely.

"But I'm supposed to choose my wife at this ball, right? I don't really want to get married to a sensitive person who can dance sweetly with this kind of serious music playing..."

"Is that so? But either way, she's your bride. You can choose who you want."

"I plan to."

"Very well. Only- it's not like just anyone will do."

King Hayashimizu quickly pushed the bridge of his glasses back up his nose with his index finger.

"It'll be problematic if your bride has ideological tendencies. No Republicans or Communists, since I am a king, after all. There are to be no religious fundamentalists, and spendthrifts and opportunists are out. She can desire to further her education, but absolutely no economists."

"Ahh."

Prince Kyouko didn't understand half of what his father had said.

"Anyway, the most important thing for me in a future queen is someone who won't harm the government. Therefore, your bride's sociability is not very important for this festival."

"If that's so, then why do we have to have a ball..."

"I feel the same way, too, but this event dates back since before the eighth age. Upholding traditions in a practical sense is a king's duty."

Because King Hayashimizu's argumentativeness was well known even throughout neighboring kingdoms, Prince Kyouko decided to not push the subject any further.

"After taking into account what I said earlier- Prince Kyouko, have you found the perfect lady?"

"Hmm, let me think..."

After the ball had started, many young ladies had introduced themselves to Prince Kyouko, but none of them had made his heart jump.

"Well, not yet. Everyone is very pretty, though."

"I see. What about those three sisters you saw a little while ago? I think it's good that they have energy."

"No. But it might be nice to have an acquaintance with them."

They were talking about a widow by the name of Mizuki and her three daughters who had come to introduce themselves earlier. But the three started a fight competing for Prince Kyouko's hand, and were taken into custody along with their mother by the palace soldiers.

Then there was a quiet bustle among the people in the room.

(Oh, she's beautiful...!)

(From which noble family is she from?)

(She's Hepburn-class, that girl)

The crowd of whispering people slowly parted. From the center a single lady gracefully moved towards Prince Kyouko.

That lady was the girl who had been transformed by Sergeant Sagara's magic, Cinderella.

"Wow..." Prince Kyouko gasped when he caught sight of her.

She had a snow-white silk dress and lustrous black hair. Her eyes were clear, and her skin was flawlessly smooth. She was a modest and graceful maiden.

"How do you do, your Highness," she said, lightly casting down her eyes and bowing politely.

"Kana **4... you're beautiful," the Prince mumbled sadly, and his cheeks reddened a little. Looking a little awkward and oblivious to anything around him, he seemed to cling to Cinderella.

Cinderella momentarily recoiled at this unexpected reaction, but after giving a small cough to clear her throat, she pulled herself together.

"Eh, ehem. Your Highness, would you do me the honor of dancing with me?" she asked, and Prince Kyouko, who felt as if he were in the middle of a dream, snapped his head back.

"Yes... let's dance, Kana..."

"Actually, that. Umm, my name is not Kana."

"Right... okay, Kana..."



Prince Kyouko, who had been emasculated by her beauty, was too far-gone.

The music being played in the hall ended perfectly just then, and a proper waltz finally began to play.

The Prince and Cinderella lightly danced, moving elegantly to the music. The people surrounding them watched fondly as the couple danced.

Since Cinderella was taller, there was no helping that she was leading the Prince, but the two were completely happy for the time being.

Meanwhile, the King Hayashimizu secretly ordered his right-hand royal intelligence leader, "Look into that girl's records and background. And don't forget to follow her later."

He was the King after all.

The music in the great hall played on without stopping. After the waltz was over, they played the tango, then changed from jazz, rock, reggae, to hip hop. It ended with an appearance by the King of Soul, James Brown, who bestowed his blessing on the two by shouting "Gettup!"

Cinderella and the Prince danced every genre. Because she was having so much fun, Cinderella forgot about the time limit.

She was happily dancing to the "Twist" when the bell started to ring ding-dong, ding-dong, at midnight.

"Oh!"

Cinderella turned pale, and she remembered the words that the wizard Sergeant Sagara had said.

(-Now, this magic will automatically end at 0000 Hours-)

She was in a pinch. The magic would quickly disappear in front of everyone, and on top of being very embarrassed, she would be arrested by the palace soldiers.

When Prince Kyouko noticed that Cinderella had stopped dancing, he gave her a curious look.

"What's wrong?"

"I-I'm sorry...! I just remembered some urgent business. I have to feed my cat."

Normally, a nobleman's daughter would not have that kind of chore.

"Eh?"

"It was fun, your Highness. Well, farewell!" she said, and before Prince Kyouko could stop her, Cinderella turned aside and ran through banquet hall. She cut across a large corridor, and reached the staircase at once.

"Wait!"

Prince Kyouko followed after her. But our Cinderella isn't the type of foolish person to wait when she is told to wait.

"Aah, dammit. It's hard to run in these," she cursed, and Cinderella simply kicked off the important glass slippers. She then continued her mad dash.

She was fast, very fast. The prince could not keep up with her.

"Guards! Someone! Stop that girl!" the prince yelled, and the palace guards stood in Cinderella's path.

Her opponents were brawny professionals. There was no way an amateur like Cinderella could defeat them in combat.

"Uh... there's nothing I can do," Cinderella had determined, when-
Bang! Bang!!

Resounded a thunderous noise, and the guards collapsed one by one.

"Eh...?"

In front of the astonished Cinderella, the wizard Sergeant Sagara appeared out of nowhere. He was still wearing his city-camouflaged robes and pointed hat, but this time he was holding a rugged shotgun.

"Can you run?"

"Eh... um, yeah."

"Then follow me," he said, and then took off. Cinderella quickly ran after him.

"Wh-why are you here-"

"Aftercare. It was difficult to penetrate the grounds without a forged invitation."

"And your weapon?"

"A magical Remington M870. It's loaded with rubber ball slugs."

Some more guards appeared in front of the two as they hurried towards the palace gate.

Bang! Bang!

The wizard shot with almost frightening accuracy, and the guards fell down. Those shot with magical stun bullets lost consciousness one after the other.

"A-amazing..."

"This way."

They ran to the palace garden, where the pumpkin coach was waiting.

"Get in! Hurry!" the wizard yelled as he fired at the guards coming their way. Cinderella quickly jumped into the carriage.

"I'm in!"

"Alright, take off!"

The coachman cracked his whip, and the wheels of the pumpkin carriage grinded and then quickly took off. At the last moment, the wizard narrowly jumped into the carriage.

However, the palace gate had already been closed, and there was nowhere to run.

"Damn, there's nowhere to go!" Cinderella cursed, and the wizard took out a hand grenade from underneath his robes and pulled the pin.

"Is that a magical hand grenade, too?"

"No, this is a holy hand grenade. There's a legend that it was once used by King Arthur."

"..."

As soon as he had said it, the wizard flung the hand grenade at the palace gate. A moment later there was a big explosion, and the gate blew up.

"Run for it!"

At once the pumpkin carriage ran through the swirling smoke and debris, and magnificently escaped from the palace.

An instant later-

The bell quit tolling midnight. The magic wore off and the carriage turned back into a pumpkin, the horses into mice, and the coachman into a lizard.

"Ahhh...!"

The carriage in which Cinderella was riding suddenly disappeared, and she was flung into open air.

The wizard skillfully twisted his body in mid-air to nimbly grab her and fell to the ground on his back. They then rolled like that into the river that followed along the roadside. After a large splash, the surface of the water became still.

It was thanks to that that the pursuing cavalry was able to go right past them.

The wizard helped Cinderella up on the shore.

"Geho... guho..."

"That was close."

She was completely drenched. The beautiful dress had returned back to her filthy, worn-out clothes.

"Ahh..." Cinderella sighed when she looked at her terrible state.

"I was getting along so well with the prince, too... and tomorrow I go back to the same harsh reality as before."

"Then would a ball everyday be better?" the wizard asked.

"No, that's not the problem-"

"If they were to hold that kind of event everyday, the country's economy would collapse."

"...I mean that I might have been able to become the prince's bride the way I was. If I did, then I would be able to get out of my terrible situation. I guess humans are happier if they don't have dreams..."

The wizard Sergeant Sagara stared at the depressed Cinderella.

"Wh-what...?"

"Cinderella. That's accepting defeat," the wizard said with the same, taciturn expression.

"Huh..."

"Even if you are losing in a disadvantageous battle, you cannot always rely on reinforcements. Reading the terrain and weather, knowing your enemy's strengths and weaknesses, enduring hardship at times, and making the best choices throughout it all is the key to survival. There is no future for a soldier who gives up on this."

Since this was the first time that the wizard had spoken to her so frankly, Cinderella just looked at him blankly.

"It's the same whether you are living in that palace. No matter where you go, there are enemies. Will you always depend on a prince?"

"I-I'm..." Cinderella had difficulty answering, and the wizard stood up.

"Use your head. Come up with an idea. You should be able to even without magic."

"Wa-wait..."

"Farewell, then," the wizard said, then started to leave. Cinderella called out to him from behind.

"Mr. Wizard!"

"What is it?" he asked as he stopped.

"Where... where are you going?"

"To the west. My next mission is waiting," he said in such a cool manner it almost didn't suit him, and then the wizard disappeared into the dark of night.

"...he's gone."

The deserted Cinderella pondered over the wizard's words.

(It's true, I do tend to rely on others too much)

Cinderella thought.

(Come to think of it, there's really no way that someone like me could be with the Prince. I have to think about my life rather than pining for an impossible dream. Men aren't dependable in crucial times. My dead father proved that to me)

Cinderella's thought quickly became more realistic.

(After all, wasn't that mansion my parents' to begin with? And complete strangers like them think they can get so cocky? Even if it is the civil code, I can't abide by such a law. That's right! I was so stupid...!)

Holding on to her boiling anger, the barefoot Cinderella headed home.

Prince Kyouko, who had completely fallen head-over-heels for Cinderella, wanted to make her his bride at all costs.

But the Prince did not know Cinderella's address, full name or telephone number. The only remaining clue he had was the glass slipper Cinderella had left behind in the palace. His father, King Hayashimizu, looked as if he had found out some information on her, but it seemed that he wanted to find out his son's **5 skills and would not tell him anything.

For that reason, Prince Kyouko gave the following orders to his servants:

"Have the girls throughout the kingdom try this slipper on, and find the girl whose foot fits perfectly! Create 128 perfect replicas and divide up into 128 teams to search!"

Now, these instructions are too logical for a fairy tale, but let's just say that the prince is that serious.

So on that day, the prince's servants took the replica slippers and scattered out across the kingdom. One of the servants, Lord Kazama, made it out to Cinderella's house not far from the castle.

Lord Kazama took the slipper and knocked on the door of the mansion. The stepmother Mizuki came out to receive him.

"Yes..."

Mizuki appeared very tired and in a daze. While the servant wondered curiously whether or not it was okay to enter, she opened the door.

"Yes, well, come in..."

The servant entered, and inside the mansion was empty. Beginning with the parlor every room was quiet, and there wasn't a piece of furniture or fixture to be found.

The three daughters, still in their ball gowns, were dejectedly crouched down in the corner of the room.

"Excuse me, but this is...?"

"Cinderella's handiwork," the stepmother said, restraining her anger. "We were detained in the palace holding cell all day, and then we come home to this...! She took everything in the mansion and sold it off in town...! She took the money and ran...! That wicked girl even kindly sold the girls' and my underwear to a porn shop...!! Is it normal to go that far?" the stepmother cried out, gnashing her teeth as if she had gone mad.

"Hah hah... that is indeed incredible."

"And when we went to the police they told us to 'Give up'! Those tax thieves! Would you say the same thing!? Well!? Say it!!"

Lord Kazama frantically calmed the furious stepmother.

"A... anyway, there's this slipper. Will you ladies try it on?"

The stepmother and daughters feebly looked at each other.

"Very well... we'll try it on just to make sure."

It should go without saying that the shoe did not fit anyone.

The wizard Sergeant Sagara was walking down a lonely road.

A non-commissioned officer such as himself could not use teleportation spells or other such conveniences. He could only walk in silence to his next assignment.

As the sun was sinking in the west, a coach came up from behind and stopped beside him. It was a modest but sturdy coach.

"Hmm...?"

When he saw the girl sitting alone in the coachman's seat, the wizard was a little surprised.

"Hello, Mr. Wizard," Cinderella said. She was outfitted in new traveling clothes and durable leather boots.

"What's the meaning of this?"

"I did what you said. I used my head and came up with a plan. Surprisingly, it's worked out."

"I see."

He nodded his head several times, saying "Mmm, mmm," with his arms crossed.

"Then it's settled," he said, and she smiled at him.

"What are you going to do from here on out?"

"Just like I said. I'm going west."

"What a coincidence. I was also thinking of traveling west. Wanna ride?"

After thinking about it for a moment, he answered, "Very well, I'll ride with you."

"At least you're honest. Well, let's go."

He sat down in the coachman's seat, and Cinderella started the carriage off again. The carriage in which the two were riding lumbered along in the direction of the sinking sun.

"By the way-" Sergeant Sagara said, "What should I call you?"

"Hmm, that's right. 'Cinderella' really doesn't fit anymore... well, it's not something that I have to think of too quickly, I guess."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. Because the road ahead is a long one, you see," she said, and as the setting sun illuminated the profile of her smiling face, she looked very glamorous.

Without ever finding the girl who perfectly fit into the glass slipper, Prince Kyouko became very despondent.

But with the amount of work and studies that was pressed upon him by the king, he was busy everyday and eventually cheered up.

Also, because he learned that even he could not have everything, he was known for years to come as a wise ruler.

And they all lived happily ever after.

-Cinderella Panic! End-

Translator's Notes:

- **1 - I've written "three kitchens" here, but the term they use is 3K, which in Japanese refers to a 2 bedroom, one kitchen apartment- just like Kaname's
- **2 - Roly poly bug is also known as a pill bug.
- **3 - A Harisen is the big fan that Kaname uses.
- **4 - Here, in Japanese, Kyouko calls Cinderella "Kana-chan", which is what she calls her because they are best friends.
- **5 - In Japanese, the word "musuko" (son) is written in kanji, while the word "musume" (daughter) is written in hiragana beside it- guess that's the problem of having a girl for a son ;)

Boku-tachi

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